

TOWN MANAGER
Ken Deal

TOWN CLERK
Pamela Mills

TOWN ATTORNEY
Tom Brooke



MAYOR
Charles Seaford

TOWN COUNCIL
Don Bringle
Arthur Heggins
Brandon Linn
Rodney Phillips
Steve Stroud

**CHINA GROVE PLANNING BOARD MEETING
ELECTRONIC MEETING
Minutes of Regular Meeting
Thursday, March 11, 2021**

The China Grove Planning Board met electronically on Thursday, March 11, 2021 at 7:00 PM at the China Grove Town Hall, 333 North Main Street, China Grove, North Carolina.

Planning Board Members Virtually Present: David Morton, Chairman
Butch Bivens, Vice Chairman
Jason Higgins
Natalie Morgan
Brie Bivens-Hager

Planning Board Members Absent: Jason Hinson
Rodney Phillips

Staff Virtually Present: Pamela Mills, Town Clerk
Franklin Gover, Assistant Town Manager

Visitors Virtually Present: Arthur Heggins

Roll Call and Recognition of Quorum

Chairman Morton called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. The presence of a quorum was recognized at that time.

Approval/ Corrections of Minutes

Mr. Higgins made the motion to approve the February 9th & 11th, 2021 minutes. Mrs. Bivens-Hager seconded the motion, upon roll call vote Mrs. Morgan voted yes, Mr. Bivens voted yes, Chairman Morton voted yes. (5-0)

Adopt Agenda

Mr. Bivens made the motion to adopt the Agenda. Mr. Higgins seconded the motion, upon roll call vote Mrs. Bivens-Hager voted yes, Mrs. Morgan voted yes, Chairman Morton voted yes. (5-0)

Public Comment

None

Chapter 160D Unified Development Ordinance update

Mr. Gover stated the NC General Assembly passed a modernization and consolidation Act for Planning and Zoning regulations in North Carolina. He stated he will show two videos from the UNC School of

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Government that will talk about the law and the changes that are coming. He stated he is working on the text amendments and they have already been viewed by the School of Government. He stated this changes are legislative required changes. He stated some are substantial and some are just changing terms and references. He stated one of the key changes for our ordinance is there will no longer be a two-part rezoning conditional use permit process. He stated we are moving to a conditional zoning process. He stated this will still allow for the Planning Board to recommend conditions to the Council and will still allow for the Council and Applicants to agree on conditions or the Council can turn it down. He stated there are a ton of resources for planners on this site. He stated the first video is an overview of 160D.

Adam Lovelady, Associate Professor of Public Law and Government

Mr. Lovelady stated that Chapter 160D is a major overhaul of the Planning and Zoning Statutes of NC. He stated it requires each local government that has zoning, subdivision or other development regulations make updates to their local ordinances, processes and policies.

Mr. Gover stated this is a significant change taking the county laws and town laws and organizing those laws. He stated come July the ordinance will need to be amended and we will follow conditional zoning process.

Mr. Gover stated the next video Mr. Lovelady talks about getting rid of conditional use permits and changing to special use permits.

Mr. Gover stated these videos are on the UNC School of Government website along with a lot of information on Chapter 160D. He stated the town will have more flexibility in the future with conditional zoning. He stated the ordinance will state during a conditional zoning process the town can request design guidelines. He stated the only time you can ask for those requirements on a single family or two family home is during the conditional zoning process. He stated we will see a lot of benefit from this change. He stated he will introduce the text amendments at the next meeting.

Board Discussion – Residential Subdivision Design

Mr. Gover stated we have seen two major subdivisions. He stated he would like to see what everyone would like to see in neighborhoods and subdivisions in the future. He stated the Town Council is having the same discussion and he would like to hear from the Planning Board what they envision. He asked the Board what they thought about the subdivision process and how we could move from suburbs to more of a community.

Chairman Morton stated a concern of his is we have a few subdivisions that are isolated. He stated he would like to see significant connectivity to these developments. He stated if we do not address this we will continue to have these pockets of developments. He stated we have to allow for the future development tie to the center of town. Mr. Gover suggested requiring more than two entrances in future developments to help with this concern. Chairman Morton stated not all areas blend well with classic grid pattern. Mrs. Morgan suggest subdividing sub parcels and establishing public spaces, easements and allies. She stated these easements and allies could be used in the future to connect the development to the next.

Mrs. Morgan stated she is concerned with fire and safety. She stated if the side setbacks are not enough it could put a burden on our Fire Department. She stated the materials being used in the subdivision could also impact fire safety. She stated vinyl siding homes put off chemicals when burning and the fire spreads easier with this type of material. Chairman Morton agreed and stated the setback would need to be greater when using vinyl siding vs brick material. Mrs. Morgan stated there are architectural guidelines we can use for materials and setbacks.

Mrs. Morgan stated she would like to see common spaces or congregational spaces in the community. Mr. Gover stated we may want to define what a common space is, is it a pool, a park, a soccer field.

Chairman Morton stated what creates a sense of community to him is when more people can walk around the town they live in. He stated he likes pedestrian friendly developments because he feels it promotes neighborhoods. He stated he likes that we require sidewalks on both sides of the street. He stated we may need to look at if the sidewalks are wide enough for two people walking side by side.

Mrs. Bivens-Hager stated she would also like to see common spaces in future developments such as a park. She stated when families walk their neighborhood and have a destination like a park then it creates a community.

Chairman Morton stated he would like to see commercial rules that promote businesses as meeting areas. He stated this could be a bar, coffee house, or a restaurant that encourages people to gather.

Mrs. Morgan stated they choose China Grove to raise their family because of the proximity to their jobs and for the walkable small-town feel. She stated she likes to know who her neighbors are. She stated the Main Street Mission does a great job at connecting the residents in the town also.

Mr. Gover asked the Board if there was one thing you would change about China Grove or the neighborhood you live in what would it be.

Mr. Heggins stated living on Kirk Street, he would like to see curb and gutter and sidewalks installed on his street. He stated there are several residents that walk the neighborhood and they would love a sidewalk and possibly have wider streets. Mrs. Morgan agreed and stated Kirk and Harry Street need improvements and sidewalks. Chairman Morton stated he would like to see sidewalks down Main Street to the Food Lion located at Kimball Road. He stated several people walk this portion of Main Street along the side of the road. He stated it would be safer to have a sidewalk. Mrs. Morgan stated there should be a better connection on Hwy 29 at Centerview Street.

Mrs. Morgan would like to see a bike path towards Landis and Kannapolis. Chairman Morton stated there has been talk about a greenway along the grants creek corridor.

Mr. Gover asked if there are any places the Board has visited that has left a lasting memory that they would like to see in China Grove.

Mrs. Morgan stated West Jefferson has changed their downtown by widening their sidewalks, removed utility poles and changed stop lights to stop signs. She stated creating a destination feel helps the businesses and encourages pedestrian traffic. Chairman Morton stated this type of improvement attracts young adults and families.

Mr. Bivens stated we are sitting on the edge of Mecklenburg County with people wanting to settle in China Grove and commute. He stated we have a great opportunity to put smaller homes or apartments in these developments. He stated the traditional homes with larger lots are not what people are looking for. He stated the younger generation seems to want smaller yards, smaller homes with less upkeep. Chairman Morton stated he does not see a problem with greater density but what he objects to is having pockets of developments that only commute to the bigger cities. Mrs. Morgan stated we do not want these developments to be starter homes because this does not create a community.

Mr. Higgins stated the town has several large properties that do not have the ability to connect to the center of town. He stated the last neighborhood that was denied had a lot of connectivity within the neighborhood along with sidewalks and common spaces. He stated he does not understand how this neighborhood could have connected to Shue Road. Chairman Morton stated that neighborhood could have more connectivity opportunities with the next future neighborhood. He stated Shue Road does separate the future neighborhoods to the existing. Chairman Morton stated if the town does not want 50 ft. lots then we should remove the option from the ordinance.

Mr. Heggins stated the Council was concerned more with the proximity of the houses in this past development. He stated if one house would catch on fire several other house could burn. He stated the quality of the houses were another thing that the Council was concerned with.

Chairman Morton stated there was a section in Chapter 160D that addressed being able to direct architectural standards onto residential subdivisions. He asked if this was only during the conditional zoning process. Mr. Gover stated we can say that Major Subdivision are not permitted by right and require conditional zoning.

Mr. Gover stated there a lot of zoning districts that allow duplexes but there are not a lot of lots. He stated we cannot tell them what the duplex can look like. Mrs. Morgan stated she thinks this is where Planning Boards can help write the narrative of how to grow. She stated we need to tell the developers they need to look at density in these type of ways. She suggested having the neighborhoods fill out a survey on what they would like to see. Mr. Gover stated our surveys have gotten more turnout over time. He stated the HWY 29 plan received 100 responses.

Chairman Morton asked what will happen if the School Board closes China Grove Middle School. Mr. Gover stated we control the zoning to the property.

Other Business

a) Membership

Chairman Morton stated we have some openings on the board and need to get those spaces filled. He stated we need two ETJ members and one in town member. He stated with a full board we have better discussions. Mrs. Morgan stated we should use our social media platforms and advertise for these vacancies.

Adjourn

Mrs. Morgan made the motion to adjourn. Mr. Bivens seconded the motion, which was carried unanimously.

David Morton
Chairman

Pamela L. Mills, CMC
Town Clerk